



ADJUDICATION NO: 31/A/2026

NAME OF PROGRAMME: BEAULAH: QUEENS VAN DIE KAAP
DATE AND TIME OF BROADCAST: 21 JULY 2026 AT 21:00
BROADCASTER: MULTICHOICE CHANNEL 145
COMPLAINANT: MCINNES

COMPLAINT

The complainant is of the view that the opening scene of the programme is disrespectful to the Christian faith.

APPLICABLE CLAUSES

SUBSCRIPTION CODE

Advocating war, violence or hatred

Clause 10: A subscription broadcasting service licensee may not knowingly broadcast material which, judged within context –

10.3 advocates hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion and which constitutes incitement to cause harm.

Exemptions

11. Clauses 9 and 10 do not apply to-

11.1 broadcasts of *bona fide* scientific, documentary, artistic, dramatic, literary or religious programming material, which, judged within context, is of such nature

11.2 broadcasts which amount to a *bona fide* discussion, argument or opinion on a matter pertaining to religion, belief or conscience

ADJUDICATION

[1] A complaint was lodged with the BCCSA against the KykNET en Kie programme ***“Beulah: Queens van die Kaap”*** broadcast on the 21st of July.

[2] **The complaint reads as follows:**

“RE: FORMAL COMPLAINT AGAINST KYKNET & KIE – “BEAULAH” BROADCAST ON TUESDAY, 21 JULY AT 21H00

I hereby lodge a formal complaint in terms of the Code of Conduct for Subscription Broadcasting Service Licensees against kykNET & Kie concerning the broadcast of Beulah on Tuesday, 21 July at 21h00.

The scene giving rise to this complaint appeared at the very beginning of the programme. Within minutes of the broadcast, viewers were presented with a portrayal clearly intended to evoke the Last Supper, one of the holiest and most sacred events in the Christian faith. I was profoundly shocked and offended by what I witnessed. Rather than depicting this sacred event with any degree of reverence, the programme presented it in a manner that I perceived as intentionally provocative, mocking and degrading.

As a practising Christian, I found the scene deeply hurtful. It was not simply controversial or challenging; it appeared calculated to ridicule a central expression of my faith for entertainment. Had the same treatment been afforded to the sacred beliefs or rituals of another major religion, I believe there would rightly have been widespread public concern.

This complaint is therefore not based on the fact that I disagreed with the programme's message. It is based on the broadcaster's editorial decision to air material that, in my view, gratuitously mocked one of Christianity's most sacred events and failed to show appropriate respect for the sincerely held religious beliefs of millions of South Africans.

I respectfully request that the Commission investigate whether this broadcast complied with the Subscription Broadcasting Code and whether kykNET & Kie exercised the editorial responsibility expected of a licensed broadcaster when deciding to transmit this material.”

[3] **The Broadcaster responded as follows:**

“Re: Complaint regarding *Beulah* broadcast on kykNET & Kie on 21 July 2026

Introduction

1. We refer to the complaint from Mr McInnes (“the complainant”) against MultiChoice (kykNET & Kie channel) concerning the broadcast of *Beulah* on 21 July 2026 at 21h00 (“the programme”).

2. The complainant submits that the opening sequence of the programme contains imagery reminiscent of the Christian depiction of the Last Supper and alleges that the scene was mocking, degrading and disrespectful towards Christianity and the sincerely held religious beliefs of Christians.
3. We appreciate the complainant taking the time to raise these concerns and acknowledge that the imagery was perceived by the complainant as offensive. Respect for diverse religious beliefs remains important to the broadcaster and we take complaints of this nature seriously.

The Programme

4. *Beaulah* is a dramatic reality series that follows seven drag queens making their mark in Cape Town's vibrant drag scene. The opening sequence forms part of the programme's broader creative expression and establishes artistic expression of both the colourful characters and the unfiltered reality series as a whole.
5. The sequence referenced by the complainant contains artistic imagery that may evoke associations with well-known cultural, historical or religious works. However, the sequence does not depict the Last Supper itself, nor does it contain any dialogue, conduct or contextual elements that ridicule, denigrate or attack Christianity, Christians, or any religious group.
6. The imagery was included as a creative and artistic device. Its purpose was not to mock, insult or belittle the Christian faith, religious beliefs or religious practices. Any resemblance perceived by viewers arises from the artistic nature of the production and the use of imagery that forms part of a wider cinematic and cultural vocabulary.

Our Response

7. The complaint appears to raise concerns relating to alleged disrespect towards a religious belief. In considering whether a broadcast contravenes the Subscription Broadcasting Service Code of Conduct, it is necessary to assess the material in its full context and against the applicable provisions of the Code.
8. The BCCSA Subscription Code is underpinned by the constitutional right to freedom of expression, which includes freedom of artistic creativity. At the same time, the Code prohibits the broadcasting of material that constitutes hate speech or advocacy of hatred based on, amongst other grounds, religion. Clause 10.3 advocates hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion and which constitutes incitement to cause harm.
9. The programme does not contain any expression advocating hatred against Christians or Christianity. Nor does it encourage hostility, prejudice, discrimination or harm against persons on the basis of their religion. There is no language, conduct, messaging or contextual element that could reasonably be interpreted as inciting harm or promoting hatred against Christians. Accordingly, the broadcast falls well short of the threshold set by the Code in respect of hate speech.
10. While viewers may differ in their interpretation of artistic or symbolic content, the BCCSA has consistently distinguished between material that some audience members may find offensive and material that contravenes the Code. The purpose of the Code is not to prohibit content merely because it may challenge, unsettle or offend certain viewers, but rather to address content that breaches the specific standards set.

11. In this matter, the imagery complained of forms part of the programme's creative presentation and narrative style. It does not contain ridicule directed at Christianity, nor is there any evidence that the broadcaster intended to mock a sacred Christian event or demean persons of the Christian faith.
12. The broadcaster nevertheless acknowledges that religious imagery may be deeply meaningful to many viewers and regrets that the complainant experienced the broadcast as offensive. The fact that offence may have been caused, however, does not in itself establish a contravention of the Subscription Code.
13. Having reviewed the programme in context, the broadcaster is satisfied that the title sequence constitutes protected artistic expression and does not amount to hate speech, advocacy of hatred, religious vilification or any other breach of the Subscription Broadcasting Service Code of Conduct.
14. We requested the channel's comment on Mr McInnes's concerns and received the following response: "kykNET wishes to express our fulsome respect for the religious beliefs held deeply by so many of our viewers. Respect for these beliefs informs key scheduling decisions on the channel, including the annual renewal of South Africa's only Afrikaans praise and worship talk show, Koortjies. It also remains important for channel to test programming which appeals to sub-segments of our viewership, or to subscribers who do not yet view kykNET&Kie. The programme's title sequence and the imagery invoked is not intended to mock but rather form part of the show's broader creative and artistic expression. While such symbolism may always be interpreted differently, the intention was not to cause offence or show any disrespect. We thank our viewers for bringing such concerns to us and for allowing us the opportunity to respond."

Conclusion

15. We thank the complainant for bringing these concerns to our attention and acknowledge the sincerity of the views expressed in the complaint.
16. While the broadcaster regrets any offence caused, it respectfully submits that the programme's title sequence and accompanying imagery were not intended to mock or degrade Christianity. Rather, they form part of the programme's broader creative and artistic expression.
17. For the reasons set out above, we submit that the broadcast does not meet the threshold for hate speech or advocacy of hatred based on religion and accordingly does not contravene the BCCSA Subscription Broadcasting Service Code of Conduct.
18. We therefore respectfully request that the complaint be dismissed."

[4] The Complainant replied as follows:

"Please find attached my reply to MultiChoice's response of 5 August 2026 regarding my complaint about the Beulah broadcast on kykNET & Kie.

I do not accept MultiChoice's response and set out my reasons in the attached letter. I respectfully ask that the Commission consider the complaint on its merits and view the broadcast sequence itself before making a finding.

This is not a claim of mere offence. The Last Supper is the central sacrament of the Christian faith. Recasting it, without consultation with any Christian body, as a reality-TV title sequence is a

use of another group's most sacred rite as entertainment material — a dignity harm in itself, independent of whether it meets the Code's narrow hate-speech threshold.

MultiChoice's response treats freedom of expression as a trump card rather than balancing it against other rights. The Response relies entirely on section 16 of the Constitution (freedom of expression) but never weighs that against section 15 (freedom of religion) or sections 9 and 10 (equality and dignity), all of which are equally constitutional. I ask that the Commission undertake that balancing exercise, which MultiChoice's own response omits entirely.

This is not a novel question for broadcast regulators. In January 2006, the UK Advertising Standards Authority upheld a complaint against a Paddy Power advertisement that altered the Last Supper to show Jesus and the apostles in a casino, finding the treatment likely to cause offence. While not binding on the BCCSA, it is directly comparable persuasive authority: another regulator, applying the same kind of balancing exercise, has already found that recasting this exact image for entertainment purposes crosses a line.

I would be grateful if these points could be read together with the attached letter when the complaint is considered. I remain available to provide anything further the Commission may need. Please let me know if any further information is required from my side.”

EVALUATION

- [5] I have reviewed the *Beulah* broadcast aired on 21 July at 19h00. This provides insight into both the Complainant's concerns and the Respondent's reply. The programme opens with several characters speaking, concluding with the words: “There can definitely be a sisterhood amongst all of us. But I don't know if that's going to happen.” At 2.09 minutes, the impugned segment begins. The setting is a church, where seven characters take their places one by one at a table. This forms the stylised opening sequence of *Beulah*. As they settle, the words, *Beulah: Queens van de Kaap*, appear on screen for six seconds, concluding at 3.09 minutes into the broadcast.
- [6] Religion is undeniably a sensitive issue. In a healthy broadcasting environment – one that is responsive to national audiences – it can be expected that most broadcasters will be open to dealing with feedback, communication from the public, and discussion on this issue (an adherent's response to how a religion is portrayed or treated in a broadcast). In a country governed by a Constitution that, in Sec 31, affirms the rights of religious communities to practice their faith and guarantees freedom of religion, it can also be expected that many, if not most, national broadcasters will strive for good practice in terms of displaying religious

sensitivity, without constraining artistic expression. The central issue with respect to this complaint lodged with the BCCSA, however, is not whether religion is sensitive in general, but whether the Broadcasting Code has been contravened.

- [7] One of two applicable clauses of the relevant BCCSA Code is Clause 10. In this clause, the Code deals with religion under the theme of hate speech. It states: “A subscription broadcasting service licensee may not knowingly broadcast material which, judged within context ...advocates hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion and which constitutes incitement to cause harm.”
- [8] Although the clause seems relevant to the complaint, a closer analysis indicates that the clause is not applicable. The Complainant, Mr McInnes, was “*shocked and offended*” by the opening segments of the programme. Referring to The Last Supper, “*the programme presented it in a manner that I perceived as intentionally provocative, mocking and degrading.*” The complainant argues that the broadcaster, in deciding to air the show, “gratuitously mocked one of Christianity's most sacred events and failed to show appropriate respect for the sincerely held religious beliefs of millions of South Africans.” Although Mr MacInnes is “*shocked and offended*”, this complaint does not aver that the programme advocated “hatred” coupled with an “incitement to cause harm”.
- [9] Clause 10 addresses religion, but it sets out more exacting requirements before a broadcaster can be found in breach. It stipulates that broadcasters may not knowingly transmit material that “advocates hatred” based on religion and “constitutes incitement to cause harm.”
- [10] The Complainant directly considers the Code's hate-speech requirements. He states that “another group's most sacred rite as entertainment material — a dignity harm in itself, independent of whether it meets the Code's narrow hate-speech threshold.” This statement appears to concede that the complaint may not meet the relevant requirements set out in Clause 10.

- [11] The other clause that makes reference to religion is Clause 11. Titled “Exemptions,” it provides that Clause 10 does not apply in certain instances. Clause 11.1 exempts “broadcasts of bona fide scientific, documentary, artistic, dramatic, literary or religious programming material, which, judged within context, is of such nature.” Clause 11.2 exempts “broadcasts which amount to a bona fide discussion, argument or opinion on a matter pertaining to religion, belief or conscience.” In effect, Clause 11 broadens the scope of permissible expression, granting particular latitude to bona fide artistic programming.
- [12] The BCCSA has consistently affirmed that “editorial freedom of a broadcaster is part of its right to freedom of expression” ***Democratic Alliance vs SABC Channel 403, Case No: 20/2018***. In that case, Prof HP Viljoen, noted that “the editorial freedom of the Broadcaster, as part of its right to freedom of expression, is [also] an important factor to consider, provided that the Broadcaster has not contravened any clause of the Code with this broadcast.” On this basis, editorial freedom is determinative unless a breach of the Code is demonstrated. However, there is no need to comment on editorial freedom, as, no violation of any clause of the Code is found.
- [13] **Having considered all aspects of the complaint, I find that there has been no breach of the BCCSA’s Subscription Code of Conduct.**



DR FRANK MEINTJIES
COMMISSIONER: BROADCASTING COMPLAINTS COMMISSION